The Floating City

A Dialect backdrop created by The Inky Baroness, inspired by the Uru and Aymara peoples

We started with a single family on a tiny floating island. Fifty years later, the island has expanded into a sprawling city of man-made islands and floating gardens, all interconnected and bustling with trade. Thirty thousand people now call it home, and it grows ever larger.

Outsiders say there is a secret source of our unexpected prosperity; a hidden catch to our success. We will never tell them why we guard so closely the inmost island, where the First Family built their home all those years ago.

There is truth in what the outsiders say: power has its price.

ASPECT GENERATION QUESTIONS

- **The Migrants.** Why did others join the First Family on the island, and why did they stay?
- **The Binding.** How do these man-made floating islands and gardens remain linked to one another?
- Free Aspect. The choice is yours.

COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

- Take a moment to decide among the group what the setting looks like: are the islands permanently **moving** around, or **static** (fixed in place)? Are the islands floating in a lake, sea, sky, or something even more exotic?
- What is our city famous for? (*Possible prompts if players struggle to decide:* Natural resources? Technology? Magic? Art? Philosophy? Commerce?)
- On a scale of *welcoming* to *hostile*, how do we treat outsiders?
- We can produce some things to support ourselves, but what do we rely on the outside world for?
- People are required to leave something behind them when they come to this community. What might that be?

NAMES

Praxsita, Ayu, K'husi, Ninil, Karakara, Chu'hullun, Iqui, Punka, Achichi, Juku, Napa, Chari, Uruwila, Mallku, Uma, Tsutsa, Qu'chani, T'hucha, Jamachiri, Paqu

Note: These names tie in with the language presented in 'Word Creation'. If the game is leaning into a specific theme, players may invent their own names or use names from their native language.

AGE TRANSITIONS

Choose a Pathway (the *black left column* or the *red right column*) on entering Age 2. Continue down the same Pathway as you progress. *Note:* The storylines may lend themselves just as well to triumph as tragedy. If the players desire a more optimistic finale, adapt 'Entering the Legacy' accordingly.

Entering Age 2. An event to foreshadow the end of the Isolation. It finds its way into all conversation and is impossible to ignore.

A messenger brings alarming news: a gigantic storm sweeps towards the city, destroying all before it. Will the bonds that tie us together (physical or otherwise) be strong enough to withstand the storm's rage... or will we be forced to abandon our homes and seek other shelter? The people must decide.

A disagreement between two powerful figures in our city has had far-reaching consequences. Several households have been separated from the city, their islands floating away in the night and soon disappearing. Was this a deliberate act of violence against the inhabitants... or were they running away?

Entering Age 3. What was foreshadowed has come to pass. The end of the Isolation is near. There is no escaping it.

The downpour has begun. The tempest tears at the islands. The wind is so strong that it pulls roofs from houses and casts people across the streets. The ties connecting us are fast disintegrating. Our city trembles like a leaf. Who flees for the boats? Who joins the crowd in the heart of the city, crying *Save us, save us?*

The threat of riot hangs over us. Every day, more islands break off and float away. Rumor speaks of a coming rift that will tear our beautiful city in half. How have the people's everyday lives changed in the face of growing civil unrest? What can we do to save our community? *(Evolve two Aspects in a drastic attempt to regain control.)*

Entering the Legacy. The last moments or the aftermath.

The inmost island has collapsed, and all that we hold most dear is crumbling before our eyes, sinking into the greedy maw of the tempest. Those who had left in boats disappeared almost immediately in the blinding rain. When the storm has passed, our once-glorious city will be no more.

There is fighting in the streets. A thousand knives flash in the sun; they fall, and with a terrible shudder, the city breaks asunder. The two halves of the city drift apart, separating families, lovers, and friends. We cannot pretend any longer: the Binding has dissolved. If you have not chosen a side, then a side has been chosen for you.

WORD CREATION

Note: Word Creation adds at least 30-45 minutes to gameplay. If you are aiming for a quicker game or need to fit a specific theme, let players generate words from their native language instead.

PICK A ROOT

Pick one of the options below to form the root of your new word. They are arranged in groups depending on whether they begin or end with a vowel (V), or consonant (C). Focus on the sounds of the root itself and choose what makes you happy. Follow your taste (this is known as *phonosemantics* in linguistics) and don't worry about the groupings for now.

- *ulan, ep, imil, alax* (V-initial, C-final)
- *ara, uraki, untu* (V-initial, V-final)
- *mora, haqa, tusa, k'ulo* (C-initial, V-final)
- *tuk, tan, choq, tulun* (C-initial, C-final)

CHOOSE AN AFFIX

An affix adds meaning to a root word and is joined either before, after, or in the middle of a word. For example, in English we have *'re-iterate'*, *'look-a-like'*, or *'constant-ly'*. Choose one of the affixes below to attach to the root to form the full word. The affixes are grouped according to whether they join with roots that begin or end with a consonant (C) or vowel (V).

Added at the start of a V-initial root:	*t-; wat-; win-;*
Added to the end of a V-final root:	*-che; -ki; -m; -ra;*
Added at the start of a C-initial root:	*ke-; lu-; wiri-;*
Added to the end of a C-final root:	*-charku; -i; -tani;*

If you are not happy with the sound of the resulting word, you may change one vowel or consonant, with the permission of the Facilitator.

NOTE

The following page contains a phonological inventory if you are interested in generating your own roots and affixes. (Facilitators should familiarise themselves with the phonology beforehand.)

Phonology Constraints

Consonant inventory (simplified IPA)

Stop	p p’	t t’	k k’	q q’	
Fricative		s t͡s t͡s’	x tʃ tʃ’		h
Nasal	m	n			
Approximant	w	l r	j		

NOTE: [t͡s] sounds like English */ts/*, [tʃ] like */ch/*, [j] like */y/*, and [q] like it does in *Quran*.

Vowel inventory (simplified IPA)

	Front	**Back**
High	i	u
Mid	e	o
Low	a	

Permitted syllable structures, with examples of each:

- **V:** *a, e, i, o, u*
- **CV:** *wa, ta, pe, k’u, ni, lo*
- **CVC:** *cak, mas, nis, qot, tsep*
- **CCV:** *ksi, tni, q’ha, xwe*
- **CVCC:** *cons, wist, liks, huhx*

NOTE: The series t’, k’, p’, ch’, ts’ and q’ may only occur at the start of a word/syllable.

You are now fully equipped to invent your own roots and affixes for *The Floating City*. If you need further inspiration, try searching in this excellent document on the now-extinct language of the Uru people, who strongly inspired the ‘The Floating City’: Uchumataqu: The lost language of the Urus of Bolivia (Hannss, K., 2008).

Another resource is the language of the Aymara people, found in the same region as the Uru; the names used in the backdrop are loosely based in Aymara, since I wanted to combine something of both languages found in the Lake Titicaca region of Peru. Here is a small dictionary to assist: Aymara Dictionary (IDS).

Be aware that not all words in Aymara will fit your phonology – but perhaps they can function for your Isolation as loanwords, hmmm...